

Hipsters, Flipsters and Finger Poppin' Daddies!

I thought I'd try and do something a little different this issue, something so different that I'm not quite sure where it came from. A little while back I got a line in my head that just wouldn't go away. It was the opening sentence of this piece. I've always been a great fan of 'what if?' fiction and this is my contribution to the genre.

Zimmerman cursed the day he'd come to New York. Dropping out of the University of Minnesota hadn't been that smart either, but sticking out his thumb and hitching across the States in one of the coldest winters on record had taken the biscuit. All he knew was he didn't fit in there, all those commie beatniks in Dinkytown with their folk music and their marijuana, and the guys in the Frat house with their stupid toga parties and beer drinking. Hell, he'd only gone there to escape from Hibbing and his parents, and it was out of the frying pan and into the fire.

He'd hated attending all the dumb classes at the U, but what had really made up his mind to leave Minnesota was the way the chicks there had broken his heart. First Judy had given him the run around, even after he'd asked her - no - pleaded with her to marry him! Then there was Gretl, the two faced bitch who'd run off with Dave Whittaker! And finally Bonnie. Well, his mother had told him to never trust a goyim schicksa, and for once his mother had been right. After a little soul searching he came to the reluctant conclusion that he only had two options and one of them was unthinkable - either go home to his parents and end up working in his dad's store, or, and this was the only one that offered any hope, get out of the state and go somewhere completely new, somewhere he could make a new start without any interference from his family, or so called friends. And that's why Zimmerman hitched all the way to New York during the coldest winter on record.

Being a good Jewish boy he booked himself into the YMCA and set about finding a job. During his first week he was hired by the city to shovel snow onto trucks and then shovel it off again into the East River. It didn't pay much but it covered his rent and allowed him the luxury of a good meal in a diner near the hostel every night. He also got a crew-cut. He just couldn't stand having unruly hair. It was so curly if he didn't get it trimmed regularly it went all over the place and made him look like a god damned beatnik. It was at the barbers that he heard about what was to become his next job.

The barber, an elderly Italian called Marco, was chatting with him about this and that, when Zimmerman happened to mention that he was new in town and looking for a work.

"Why don't you try the taxi place round the block?" Marco drawled.

"They're always on the look out for new drivers. It's called The Jack o' Diamonds Cab Company. Say Marco sent you."

"But I don't know the city"

"What's to know?" replied the barber. "All the streets are in a straight line. You go uptown, you go cross-town. The only place with street names is the Village, and most of those are after 4th Street. You'll learn 'em easy enough."

Which is how, two weeks later, he found himself picking up a slightly flustered looking, bug eyed man from outside the New York Times office.

"Waverly Street, driver," his fare asked, slouching back into the back seat of the cab.

"Er, I'm sorry sir, but you're going to have to direct me. I've only been doing this job for a week," said Zimmerman looking in the rear view mirror at his customer.

"Shit! Never mind. It's in Greenwich Village. Just drive downtown and I'll direct you from there. And don't call me 'sir'. My name's Bob. Bob Shelton. What's yours?"

"I'm called Bob too, but you can call me Zimmy," the young driver replied, pleased at least that 'Shelton' or whatever his name was, wasn't going to jump out and get another cab which did know where it was going.

"How long you been in town Zimmy?" asked Shelton.

"Round about a month now. Came here from Minnesota."

"Hey, do you know Dinkytown?" Shelton called from the back.

Zimmerman felt the muscles in his neck tighten. "Yeah", he replied slowly.

"Why d'ya ask?"

"I hear there's a good music scene there. Is that right?"

"I guess if you're into folk music, yeah. Why do you ask?" said Zimmerman peering through his thick spectacles.

Shelton appeared to be taking a brown paper bag out of his briefcase.

Pausing for a second he looked up - "Been a long day. Don't mind if I take a drink do you?" Without waiting for an answer he took a swig out of a bottle that was in the bag. "I write music reviews for the New York Times. Folk music mainly. You heard of Odetta? Or Cisco Houston? Woody Guthrie? I write reviews of people like them."

"The Kingston Trio! I like them!" shot back Zimmerman. "Hang down your head Tom Dooley. That was a great song! Heard 'em on the radio."

He could swear he heard a noise from the back of the cab. A noise like a man stifling a laugh.

"Yeah, The Kingston Trio," chuckled Shelton. "Look Zimmy, drop me off here. I gotta meet somebody anyway."

They were on W. 3rd, just outside a club Zimmerman recognised as 'Gerdes Folk City'.

"You got a call number for this cab. I might use you again. A guy with your grasp of folk music might be handy to have around when I can't think of anything to write about", said Shelton squeezing himself out of the cab door. He pressed three bucks into Zimmerman's hand and told him to keep the change.

And so it was that Zimmerman came across Shelton on a fairly regular basis in the weeks to come. It even made him take an interest in what was happening in the Village. He liked to please Mr Shelton with his

knowledge of who was playing where, and one Sunday afternoon he even surprised himself by braving the cold and going to Washington Square to watch the 'Folkies' in action. It just confirmed his original impressions from Dinkytown - a bunch of caterwauling hill-billies couldn't do worse than the kids he saw plucking banjos and wailing away like Alabama share-croppers. Give him Frank and Bing every time. Now those guys knew how to sing, and you could understand the words properly, not like all that stuff about roses growing out of people's brains and lovers who are really geese and swans that turned into angels - whatever all that shit meant. Give him Johnny Ray or Johnny Mathis anyday.

Still, even if he couldn't stand the music it he got a buzz out of dropping names on Mr Shelton. "Hey, I see Victoria Spivey's playing at Gerdes tonight", and "That Dave van Ronk fella sure gets around, Mr Shelton". His favourite fare took to booking Zimmerman to pick him up after gigs as well as after work, but the young cabbie wasn't too keen on that because very often the writer would be drunk and with a bunch of his beatnik musician friends and they always seemed to end up pitching him questions he felt awkward about. In fact, if he didn't know better he might almost say they were making fun of him. One night there was a guy with Mr Shelton, a tall guy with a mid-west drawl and a cowboy hat who kept sending his pal into fits of hysterics with his questions for the driver - "Hey, Jimmy? Those Brothers Four. What they done to Woody's songs. Kinda neat huh? The way they changed 'em around with those harmonies and everything", the cowboy shouted.

"Take it easy Jack," spluttered Shelton. "The kids only been in town a couple of months."

"And those matching outfits? Real clean looking, huh?" continued Jack oblivious to his friend's comments.

All in all though, it was kinda fun driving Mr Shelton and his friends round, particularly because it taught Zimmerman the lay-out of the Village streets and the places all these people hung out at. Eventually through Mr Shelton, he reckoned he must have met all the 'happening' people there

were in the Village and what was better was the fact that they used to book his cab as well. Eventually he stopped driving days and stuck to the night shift because it was more lucrative, and some of these folkies were big tippers especially when they were drunk.

One of his regular customers that he's met through the New York Times writer was a young girl called Suze. She lived with her mother and sister and Zimmerman got the impression that she worked in the theatre or something. Whatever, she was young and cute looking, but he only had eyes for her older sister Carla who worked for another friend of Mr Shelton's, another weird music nut called Lomax.

On the odd occasion Carla got in the cab with Suze, Zimmerman found himself curiously tongue tied. It was mainly because she seemed so sophisticated and worldly. He knew the family was mixed up in politics, they were always going on about civil rights and 'the bomb' whenever they were in the back of the cab. Once he even took them to demonstrate outside Woolworth's because the store still had segregated seating in their cafes in the South. Carla asked him to come and join them and he messed up by mumbling and saying something about having to pick up another fare. Afterwards he realised that he'd blown a perfectly decent chance to get to know her better, but what did he care about the things going on in the South. If his parents had taught him one thing it was to keep his Jewish head down when people began going on about race.

Spring brought blossom to the trees of Washington Square, but summer brought with it murder.

The first Zimmerman knew about it was when he went to the garage early one evening to collect his cab. The boss, a big lug called Riordan, called him over to the dispatcher's office where he was sat at his desk with two cops opposite him.

"Jimmy. This is Patrolman Clayton and Patrolman Clooney. They want a word with you."

“Relax Mr Zimmerman, we just want to ask you a few questions” said one of the cops.

Although he knew he hadn’t done anything wrong he couldn’t help but feel nervous and he could feel his cheeks starting to turn red as the two cops looked him over.

“Yeah, anything. Yeah” he mumbled as they handed him a photograph of a young girl. For a moment his heart leapt because it looked just like Carla’s sister Suze. Then he realised the girl in the picture was dead, her head slightly to one side, a sheet pulled up around her chin.

“This young woman was found murdered in the Village last night Mr Zimmerman. Al here,” he gestured towards Riordan, “Tells us you work there a lot and you might have seen her around?”

Zimmerman studied the picture for a few moments, silently cursing Riordan for putting him in this position. “I’d like to help officer, but I don’t think I’ve seen her before. What happened to her?”

“We can’t go into too many details at the moment. Her body was found just before midnight in an alley off Bleeker Street.”

The cabby felt a rush of relief. He’d had to drive a bunch of gamblers out to Atlantic City the night before, and while he’d cursed them then he was blessing them now. He hadn’t got back to town till after one. Come to think of it, there had been a crowd and a few patrol cars parked up near The Kettle of Fish, but he hadn’t given it much thought just imagined some drunken students had been fighting again.

“Er, I was.. “ Zimmerman began.

“Out of town. We know”, said Clooney, finishing off Zimmerman’s sentence for him. “So you haven’t seen her hanging around the Village before?” he carried on.

“Not that I can recall”, he replied desperately searching his memory. “But if I remember anything I’ll be sure to get in touch.”

The two cops got up. “Oh well, you know what it’s like with runaways, the Village is full of ‘em,” Clooney said in the doorway.

The girl’s murder barely made page three of The Post, buried alongside an article about a young local boxer called Davey Moore who was looking at

moving up the fight ladder and having a crack at the title in the next year or so, but it didn't say too much. Her name was Karen Willis, a teenage runaway from Oaklyn New Jersey, and she's been stabbed, probably after an argument. Police were looking for any witnesses as to her whereabouts that night, etc. The usual stuff. Like the TV show said, there are eight million stories in the naked city. Zimmerman went back to driving. Before another week had passed he'd wish he hadn't.

Around ten in the evening he was cruising round Washington Square heading towards MacDougal when he spotted her. The same age as the dead girl, same colour hair. She was wearing blue jeans and an old navy pea jacket. He was driving past her when a man shot up behind her and grabbed her arm. Before Zimmerman could see what was happening they'd vanished into the night, probably into the doorway of an NYU dorm. As he carried on up MacDougal he tried to put her out of his thoughts. After all, she was just another kid. She might even be a student, what did he want to know for?

He pulled up the cab by the sidewalk, climbed out, locked the door and walked back towards the Square. At first he didn't notice her body by the trash-cans, it looked like a sack of garbage, but on his way back to the cab he took a longer glance and noticed the crimson stain spreading across the flagstones. She was face down like a broken doll and it made him sick. Retching he turned away and weakly called for help.

Ten minutes later a detective from Homicide was helping him clean the front of his suede jacket while flash-bulbs popped all around.

"So you saw somebody grab her and thought you'd take a look?" asked the detective wiping his front for him. Zimmerman was still in shock. A few feet away an old rabbi was confirming to another detective that he'd seen Zimmerman park his car and walk back towards the Square, then shout for help. "Probably some hop-head after cash. They'd kill their own mothers for a fix." said the rabbi gesturing towards the dead girl.

All Zimmerman could think about was that he hoped none of this got in the papers. If his mother read about it she'd go crazy, get on the first plane to New York and drag him back to Hibbing. "Oh God, no" he groaned.

"What was that?" shot the detective.

"Not another poor girl like the last one" he answered quickly. "Two of your guys came to our office asking about her."

"What makes you think the same guy did both of them?"

"They look so alike, that's why" answered Zimmerman before retching again.

The night seemed never ending. They took him to the precinct house where he spent what felt like hours making a statement, going over it again and again to see if he could remember what the assailant looked like. But it had all happened so quickly he couldn't give them anything other than the briefest description - a white male in dark clothing. He'd only seen him for a second at the most. Finally they let him go and a friendly beat cop drove him back to his cab. Too tired to continue and too disturbed to sleep he drove aimlessly around the Village in a kind of half consciousness. Stopped at the traffic lights on 6th and Christopher Street he jerked awake when somebody rapped on his side window. It was Shelton.

"Hey Zimmy! Am I glad to see you. I gotta go uptown straight away" he shouted climbing into the back seat. "What's wrong with you, you look like you've seen a ghost?"

On the way to 64th the young driver explained the night's events, while Shelton nodded his head sympathetically.

"The last thing you want to do is let it bug you. You can drop me off here. Now take this," Shelton offered him his brown paper bag.

"But I don't drink, Bob" stammered Zimmerman.

"Go on, take it. Go home and drink it. It'll do you good." insisted the writer.

Zimmerman reluctantly took the bottle and drove off into the night.

The next day the murder was headline news. Fortunately his name had been left out of it. The papers just said that the body had been discovered by a taxi-driver and left it at that. Probably as he couldn't give the police a clear enough description they didn't seem particularly interested in him, But this time they knew more about the victim.

She had a name and a past. She was Rebecca Cunningham, daughter of the Reverend John Cunningham, and he was well known in New York political circles as an active member of whatever protest group was going. The same went for Rebecca. Since the age of ten she'd been on every march or sit-in there was. In New York media terms the family were well-known liberals. She wasn't a runaway either. Her family lived in Gramercy Park and were devastated that she was the second victim of, a murderer the papers were now calling - The Village Ripper.

The cops were denying there was a link between the two murders but one source privately conceded that there were 'certain similarities'. Other than that they had to admit they had no firm leads to go on as the only eye-witness - Zimmerman gulped - couldn't furnish any useful details.

He took the next couple of days off and by the time he went back to work the temperature had gone off the charts and it was an unbearable eighty-nine degrees and so humid that the moment you stepped outside from the air-conditioning it felt like someone had wrapped a warm, wet blanket around you. In his cab, even with all the windows down, it felt like a sauna. The summer heat, if anything, made the Village a more popular place, the side-walk cafes were teeming with people, the clubs full. The murders seemed forgotten. None of his passengers talked about them. Even Suze didn't bring it up in conversation when he picked her up one evening outside her mothers, and they only lived a couple of blocks away from the murder site. Zimmerman didn't pursue it, even though he was privately worried about Carla what with the resemblance and all.

Then one night somebody did bring it up. He'd got a call there was a pick-up asking for him at the Bottom Line and when he pulled up outside he

recognised the guy waiting near the doorway as having been with Mr Shelton one night.

The guy got in and Zimmerman studied him in the rear view mirror. Tall and skinny with a mop of curly hair that was way too long even by Village standards. He was dressed in jeans and a denim work shirt with the sleeves rolled up. Zimmerman thought it was funny, the fare was wearing shades even though it was after mid-night. The guitar case he carried with him went some way towards explaining that. He was obviously a musician and they did things like that, Zimmerman thought to himself. They thought it made them look 'cool'.

"You the guy called Jimmy?" his customer enquired. "Shelton said you were reliable. My name's Morgan. I just played at the Bottom Line." He gestured back to the club and carried on without drawing breath, "Take me to St Marks Place. There's a bar called Reno's. I'm going there." He slid into silence and leaned back in the seat. He seemed to be breathing hard, his leg was bouncing up and down and Zimmerman noticed he was clutching something in his hand. For a moment he thought it was shining. Then it was gone.

"You the driver who saw that Ripper cat the other night?"

Zimmerman was startled. "That's right. Didn't see enough though. Not enough to catch him."

He thought he heard Morgan say something like "Better stay that way."

"Excuse me?" he asked shooting Morgan another glance in the mirror.

"I said, isn't it better that way? Easier to get across town." Morgan gestured with his free hand.

"Makes no difference this time of night" replied Zimmerman. Morgan didn't say anything, just stared hard at a group of teenage girls walking along the street. He muttered something else which Zimmerman didn't catch.

Morgan didn't say another word until he got dropped off at Reno's and even then he only said good night as he pushed a five dollar bill towards Zimmerman. Morgan's hands were strangely cold and clammy, especially with it being so warm outside. It made Zimmerman shudder.

Not as much as shuddered the next day when he caught sight of the headlines. Another girl, another murder. This time near 4th Street. The cops said it had the same MO as the other two and were redoubling their efforts to find the criminal responsible. This time though, thought Zimmerman, he might know more than them. He needed to find Shelton and fast.

Shelton sprawled in the back of the cab – “Morgan? I thought you’d a heard of him. He’s one of the best goddamn new singers around. He’s started to write his own stuff too. It’s pretty good if a little derivative. I might review him soon, he’s supposed to be getting a record deal.”

“Where does he live?” asked Zimmerman, glancing back.

“I know where he hangs out,” replied Shelton, “But I’m not sure that he lives anywhere. He crashes at all the usual places, the Gleasons, Van Ronks, sometimes with Hugh Romney.”

Zimmerman felt a stab of pain. He’s met Romney. He was a kind of master of ceremonies at several of the venues in the Village. He used to pass the basket round for the performers. And then one night he’d gotten into Zimmerman’s cab outside Folk City and the girl on his arm was none other than Bonnie from Minnesota. What had hurt worse was, she hadn’t even recognised him. Of course he’d put on a lot of weight since university. The puppy fat he’d had then had solidified and sitting in a cab and driving around all night hadn’t helped get rid of it. Mark Spoelstra had once jokingly told him he should take amphetamines like a lot of the performers did. They’d keep him awake, and thin, he’d said, but Zimmerman had a natural reluctance to take anything a doctor hadn’t prescribed. He didn’t even drink that much, just a little wine at Passover.

“Anyway. Why this sudden interest in Morgan?” Quizzed Shelton.

“Er, no reason,” stammered Zimmerman. “He just seemed interesting. He got in the cab the other night. Seemed in an awful hurry.”

“He’s always in an awful hurry,” said Shelton. “He’s got this idea that he hasn’t got long to live. The way he tells it he’s already lived enough for two guys his age. Makes his songs interesting though. OK, drop me off here, I’m going to watch Carolyn Hester.”

For the next couple of nights Zimmerman kept his eyes peeled for any sign of Morgan. He knew he had no reason for suspecting him other than a peculiar kind of gnawing in the gut, but the more he heard about him the more convinced he was that Morgan fitted the frame. For a start, apparently he was an arrogant little prick, always putting people down. He could be really nasty when he put his mind to it, viciously sniping at other people's weaknesses, particularly women, so Zimmerman was told. Another thing was the way he lied about his background, telling one person one thing and then somebody else another. Morgan had, at times, been – in a circus, a medicine show, a reform school for runaways – Zimmerman thought the last one was probably true anyway. The guy claimed to have been everywhere and done everything. People even hinted that Morgan wasn't his real name. Whichever way you cut it, Zimmerman did not like Morgan.

He like him even less when three nights later Morgan got into Zimmerman's cab. Getting in after him was Carla. "Hi Zimmy," she shouted. "Take us to The White Horse, we're meeting the Clancy brothers".

Zimmerman stared in disbelief as Carla and Morgan kissed and cuddled throughout the journey. By the time they got to the bar, he was almost emotionally torn apart.

"There you go, kid," said Morgan thrusting a five spot at him. Zimmerman sat speechless as they disappeared inside. He could hear the sounds of music and laughter coming from within the tavern. He switched off his engine and decided to wait until they came out. That way he could protect Carla if that schmuck Morgan made any move on her. He checked underneath the dashboard for the Saturday night special revolver he kept there. Taking it out he put it in his lap and settled down to wait.

He must have fallen asleep because he was suddenly woken up by a frantic rapping on his window. Shaking himself awake he rolled the window down. Carla stood there looking really messed up.

"Open your door Jimmy! Let me in!" she shrieked.

She hurriedly climbed in and slumped down.

"Gimme a cigarette Jimmy, please," she gasped.

Confused and half frightened Zimmerman turned round to speak to her.

"I, er, I don't smoke Carla. What's going on? You need help?"

"It was Morgan - the rat!"

Zimmerman clutched his revolver. "What did he do to you Carla?"

"Would you believe he wanted me to set him up with Suze! Wanted to get his ugly claws on here next. The cheap bum!"

Tears were rolling down her cheeks and Zimmerman felt overwhelmed with love for her. To see her in this state was just about broke him up.

"And all the time he was just using me. I hate him!" she sobbed.

"Where is he now, Carla?" Zimmerman heard himself asking her.

"We had a row. He stormed off. Said he was going to find her. Jimmy, I'm so worried for her!"

"Take it easy Carla. We'll go round to your mother's and check Suze's OK," he reassured her as he started up the engine and headed off into the labyrinth of streets that made up the Village's lower end.

A few minutes later they reached Mrs Rotollo's brownstone. Zimmerman screeched to a halt by the kerb and Carla flung open the door and leaped out ahead of Zimmerman who followed after her, clutching the gun in his right hand.

They could hear screaming as they neared the door of the Rotollo's apartment.

Before they could get there they found Mrs Rotollo lying slumped in the hallway, a bloody stain covering her chest.

"Oh my God!" screamed Carla falling to her knees and looking round imploringly at Zimmerman. "Quick! Go inside! Stop him!"

Zimmerman blundered forward and flung open the door. Furniture lay scattered around the room and in the corner the TV was on, its flickering blue light illuminating the scene in front of him. He could make out a

terrified Suze clutching the mantelpiece for support. Off to one side the figure of a man lay sprawled face down on the floor.

“Suze. Suze. It’s OK. Carla and I are here,” he said softly as he trod over to the figure of the man. “What happened to – “

He was going to say, “Morgan”, but as he turned over the man’s body he realised it wasn’t the singer.

“I hit him over the head with an ashtray.” Murmured Suze looking ashen faced. “He rang the bell and Mom answered. The next thing I knew he rushed in here waving a knife. Mom!” she shrieked turning around in confusion.

“It’s OK Suze.”

It was Carla. “She’s been stabbed, but she’s gonna be OK. The neighbours have called an ambulance. The cops’ll be here in a minute.”

The two sisters hugged each other and Zimmerman stared at the unconscious man. He looked vaguely familiar, but he just couldn’t place him.

“I guess this is a bad time to call.”

Morgan stood framed in the doorway.

Zimmerman spun round and trained his gun on him.

“Whoa! Steady cowboy. I just popped round for a social visit. I didn’t realise it was a party.” He half smiled, taking in the scene.

“Ah,” he said stepping over to the figure on the ground. “The Reverend John Cunningham, I believe”. He crouched down and stared intently at the man’s face. “And out cold too. Guess I won’t be asking you out in a hurry, Suze. Seems like you pack quite a punch.”

Zimmerman stared at him, speechless with bewilderment. In the background he could hear sirens getting closer.

Morgan glanced up at him...

“He’s the ‘Village Ripper’, Zim. You know – the guy who’s been going round killing girls?”

“But he was the father of the second girl...” muttered Zimmerman.

Cunningham gave a groan and started moving his head. His eyes opened and he blinked.

Suze lunged forward - "You bastard! Why my mother!" she shouted violently.

Carla held her back, "Come on, we should be with Mom." She helped her sister out of the room and into the hall where the paramedics had just arrived.

Zimmerman found his voice - "What the Hell's going on Cunningham?"

"She was going away," he groaned. "Going away with this, this freak!"

Morgan smirked. "They all wanna go away with me, man, but they don't understand that I ain't going nowhere."

"That doesn't explain why you killed that first girl, Karen." snapped Zimmerman.

"I thought the only way to stop her was to kill her. You don't know what she was like when she'd made up her mind to do something. Nothing would stop her. I had to kill her so I could save her from herself!"

Cunningham broke down in tears and lay back on the floor sobbing.

By this time the room was beginning to fill up with cops. To Zimmerman's surprise, Morgan held out his arm and they stepped back.

"So you mistook Karen Willis for Rebecca, didn't you?" quizzed Morgan.

The bewildered taxi driver noticed that he now had a detective's badge pinned to his shirt. That's what he'd been holding in the back of the cab. Not a knife. A badge. Morgan was a cop.

"OK, Reverend - Let's have your last confession. Why the Rotollos?"

Morgan stared fiercely into Cunningham's face waiting for an answer.

Zimmerman felt faint as the murderer stopped crying and opened his eyes again.

"Why not?" he answered staring furiously at Morgan.

"I'd lost my little girl, why shouldn't she lose hers?"

Morgan punched him in the face. Suddenly. Brutally. Blood spurted from his broken nose. Zimmerman knew he was going to be sick again. He couldn't help but feel he should be used to all this by now. He held back the bile.

"Fuckin' freak!" snarled Morgan. "Clooney, book him. Clayton... help Mr Zimmerman find the toilet before we see his dinner again."

In a daze Zimmerman allowed himself to be led away by the burly patrolman. When he'd finished in the bathroom Morgan and Cunningham were gone.

"Could you believe it?" shouted Shelton. "Morgan was a cop all along. And not any old cop he was narc! Jeezuz! When I think of the things I must have told him!" Mr Shelton shuddered.

It was a week after the bust. The papers had had a field day. Morgan was a hero. It seemed that he was an undercover narcotics officer who'd been put into place in the clubs of Greenwich Village to flush out dope fiends and such like. He'd been picked by the NYPD because he played guitar. Turned out his real name was Cohen. He'd called himself Morgan after some Welsh poet. Or maybe the brand of rum he drank. Nobody knew for sure. He'd latched onto the Ripper murders because he was right there in the thick of it in the Village.

"And those fools at Columbia were actually going to offer him a recording contract! Jeezuz Jimmy! This is one strange world." fumed Shelton as the cab drove him back to Waverley Street.

Zimmerman half-listened to Shelton fulminating about the last few weeks. It was early Fall now and New York was cooling down. The leaves on the trees in Central Park were beginning to turn brown. For the first time in a long time Zimmerman felt relaxed about living here. Now that Cunningham had been arraigned before the Grand Jury, now that the Village was as back to normal as it would ever be, now that he felt some kind of peace at last, Mr Shelton's ramblings didn't bother him so much anymore.

He idly flipped on the car radio - apparently the President was going to make a speech about Cuba. Might be interesting to listen to it....

Well, some of the people were real - in fact, most of the people were real - all of the places were real, and, who knows, a singing detective isn't that far from the bounds of practiced credulity either!

I hope you enjoyed the piece and I promise never to venture into the realms of fiction again.

CP Lee